CROFTER COLONISATION.

FIFTH REPORT

OF

HER MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED TO CARRY OUT A SCHEME

OF

COLONISATION IN THE DOMINION OF CANADA

OF

CROFTERS AND COTTARS FROM THE WESTERN HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS OF SCOTLAND;

WITH

APPENDICES.

Presented to both Houses of Parliament by Command of Her Majesty.

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FIFTH REPORT

OF THE

COLONISATION BOARD.

TO THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR MAJESTY:

WE, the undersigned Commissioners appointed under Your Majesty's Sign Manual for the purpose of carrying out a scheme of colonisation in the Dominion of Canada of crofters and cottars from the Western Highlands, and the islands of Scotland, and from the congested districts of Ireland, desire humbly to submit to Your Majesty the following Report:—

Reports have been received from the agent of the Board in Canada relating to the settlements at Killarney, in Manitoba, and at Saltcoats, in the North-West Territories, for the year 1893. The former was established in the summer of 1888, and the latter in the spring of 1889.

Statements are appended containing extracts from the agent's reports (Appendix A.) and summaries of the statistics (Appendix B.), showing the position of the settlements in 1893, the acreage under various crops, live stock on the farms, and other information.

The area under cultivation in the Killarney Settlement becomes larger year by year, and the live stock belonging to the crofters continues to show a satisfactory increase in numbers.

There were 3,461 acres under cultivation in 1893, as compared with 1,420 in 1890, and adding to the former figures the 1,011 acres which have been prepared for crop this year, the arable land in the settlement is 4,472 acres. Dividing this among the 30 families it gives an average of nearly 150 acres per family.

Of the 4,472 acres before referred to, only 3,939½ acres are held by crofters under obligations to the Board. Of that area 2,623 acres were on the homesteads belonging to the heads of families—an average of 87½ acres each; and 1,316 acres on those of the younger members of families, (25) who have taken up farms—an average of 53 acres each.

The crops in the Killarney District were not so abundant as in other parts of the country, the season having been in some respects an unfavourable one. Computed, however, at a low average price, the value of the wheat raised in the settlement was $11,557.60; of oats, $1,827.00, and potatoes $1,404.65, a total of $14,789.25. These figures do not take into account the wages that must have been earned by the crofters in many cases, and other sources of revenue open to them, or the value of the increase in the live stock. The large number of horses, and of other stock purchased by the crofters since 1890, is also an indication of material progress.

The position of the Saltcoats crofters is not so satisfactory. Owing partly to a series of unsatisfactory seasons, the families remaining in the settlement have not increased the cultivation of their farms to the extent that might have been anticipated. The spring of last year was rather late, and, consequently, some of the crofters who asked to be assisted with seed grain, and potatoes, did not sow all that was supplied to them, but disposed of a portion of it in other ways.

According to the agent's reports, however, the crops in the neighbourhood were generally good, and those settlers whose land was sown in the early days of May had a return of 20 bushels to the acre of wheat, and a fair yield of other crops. Those of the crofters, also, who properly cultivated their farms, and sowed their seed, had a return of at least 18 bushels of wheat to the acre; and there is no reason whatever why all of them should not have been equally successful.

The live stock shows a fair increase, and some of the crofters have been able to purchase not only horses, but additional oxen and cows. They would have been in

a much better position than they are now in that respect, but for the number of stock lost in the settlement in the winter of 1892–93, as mentioned in our previous report. This was largely owing to the abnormal winter, and to insufficient fodder having been provided for the sustenance of the animals.

It is gratifying to notice that the agent, in his report, considers the crofters remaining at Saltcoats to be on the fair road to success, and that the experience they have passed through will have a good effect upon their future.

It may be mentioned that notwithstanding the slow progress that has been shown at Saltcoats, the crofters at that place have been self-supporting for some years past. The total indebtedness of the 23 settlers to the six storekeepers in Saltcoats amounts to but $112.40, and they have only incurred liabilities to the extent of $673 in regard to agricultural machinery. In both these respects they contrast very favourably with the crofters at Killarney, where greater material progress has been made.

We regret to report that the Killarney crofters have not paid the first instalment of the money advanced to them, which was due in November 1892. They have unwisely incurred other liabilities in addition to their indebtedness to the Board. They also allowed their taxes to the local municipalities to get into arrear, but have since paid off a small amount. Some years ago, seed-grain was supplied to them by the municipality, the value of which has not been repaid. To machine companies, for farm implements, they owe $7,231.66, a large part of which need not have been incurred; and to local storekeepers they are indebted to the extent of $14,869.49. Their debt to the Board is about $23,890, which, added to their other obligations, about $25,000.00 in all, makes up a total of nearly $49,000.

As mentioned already, the value of the crops alone last year, even at the extremely low prices that have prevailed, amounted to nearly $14,790, which forming, as it does, only a part of their earnings, cannot be considered an unsatisfactory return for the capital invested.

In consequence of the nonpayment of the municipal taxes, the farms of some of the crofters have been nominally sold. They can, however, be redeemed within two years, at a premium of 10 per cent. per annum; and unless the crofters pay the taxes, which they are being strongly urged to do, it will be necessary for the Board to become responsible for the amounts, in order that its security may not be invalidated.

Some of the crofters have, the agent reports, paid a further portion of the overdue taxes, but the total taxes and seed-grain accounts outstanding by latest advices was $2,913.76. They have all been informed that unless they meet these obligations at once, they cannot expect to receive any indulgence from the Board in connexion with the postponement of their overdue instalments.

If the taxes are not paid, and the Board have to become responsible for them; and if any modified arrangements that may be made with regard to the repayment of the instalments are not carried out, the course that it will be necessary to take for the protection of the interests of the Board will require consideration.

In dealing with the position of the settlements, regard must be had to the changes that have taken place in the condition of agriculture all over the world. The local prices of wheat and of other farm products are little more than half what they were when the settlements were formed, and the same remark applies to live stock. If the former prices had been maintained, both the crofters at Killarney and at Saltcoats would have been in a very different position to that which they occupy to-day.

When it is remembered, that even at very low prices, the crops at Killarney were valued last year at $14,789, and that the Board's debt against the settlement is only about $23,890, it is apparent, that had prices been maintained at anything like a reasonable rate, the produce of the crops alone, apart from wages or the increase of stock, would have, in one year, been sufficient to more than cover the debt upon the settlement. The agent, in a recent report, stated that the only complaint made to him by the crofters on a recent visit was that the low prices offered for their produce did not enable them to meet their obligations to the Board.

The first instalment of the debt of the Saltcoats settlement became due in the autumn of last year. It has not been paid, and, in the circumstances already alluded to, it is probable that some indulgence will have to be extended to the settlers, a matter which is having the consideration of the Board.

In our previous report, reference was made to certain complaints from the Saltcoats crofters formulated in a petition addressed to the Secretary for Scotland. Sir Charles Tupper, the High Commissioner for Canada, a member of the Board, visited the Dominion last year, and was good enough to investigate the matter on the spot. A copy of his report is appended (Appendix C.) It will be seen that Sir Charles

Tupper does not regard the complaints as well-founded. They related more or less to difficulties inseparably connected with the migration of a number of families from one country to another. Most of the complaints were investigated by the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Colonisation, which made its report to Parliament in 1891. Sir Charles Tupper has formed, on the whole, a favourable opinion of the scheme, so far as it has been carried out, and looks forward with confidence to the future success of the settlement.

No colonisation has yet been undertaken by the Board from the congested districts of Ireland.

(Signed) GEORGE OTTO TREVELYAN.
HORACE PLUNKETT.
CHARLES TUPPER.
JAMES KING.
COLIN SCOTT-MONCRIEFF.
JOHN ROSS OF BLADENSBURG.
JAMES BELL.
THOMAS SKINNER.

J. G. COLMER, Secretary.
June 1894.

APPENDIX A.

EXTRACTS FROM AGENTS' REPORTS.

Extract from the Report of the Agent on the Killarney Settlement.

"The cause of the low yield per acre for season of 1893 is accounted for by hot winds, which visited the Colony during the month of June, and to high winds during harvest time, which thrashed the grain out.

"The grain harvested by the settlers was, of the best quality, and rated No. 1 hard.

"The average price paid to the crofters for their wheat was $0.45, and oats $0.22 per bushel.

"The only complaint made to me by the crofters, was, that the low prices offered for their grain would not permit them to meet their obligations to the Board.

"All crofters assured me they would pay their municipal indebtedness out of the proceeds of this year's crop."

Extract from the Report of the Agent on the Saltcoats Settlement.

"It will be further observed from the schedules enclosed, that notwithstanding the heavy loss of stock, some of the crofters sustained during the winter of 1892 and 1893 by not putting up sufficient hay, they have still a fair herd, which, with careful husbanding, will, in time, be the means of enabling these settlers to meet their obligations to the Board.

"From the data enclosed, it will be apparent to the the Board that it is not at present the crofters' intention to go largely into grain-growing. If this statement is accepted, it would be necessary for the Board to base any calculations with regard to the time the crofters will be expected to repay their loans on the natural increase of the stock now in their possession, and not so much on the proceeds to be derived from the sale of grain grown.

"On the agent's recent visit to Saltcoats he ascertained from the six shopkeepers doing business there, that the total indebtedness of the crofters to them, amounted to $112.40, and that certain of the crofters could obtain small credits at any time they wished. The total indebtedness for farm machinery purchased was ascertained to be $673.00.

"On the whole, the agent considers the crofters located in the Colony of 'Lothian' to be on the fair road to success. The experience gained by the loss of so much stock and crop, through their own want of care can have but a good effect."

The only complaint made to the agent on his recent visit to the Colony was that "Some enemies of us "crofters are telling lies to the papers." When asked to what lies they referred, they said, 'They say we are "starving and being frozen to death. We are not in "want; we have cattle, and lots to bake."—a statement that can be easily verified by any person visiting their houses, when bags of flour and oatmeal can be seen.

APPENDIX B.

KILLARNEY CROFTERS, 1890-93.

Number of Families.	Wheat.		Oats.		Potatoes.		Total Acres under cultivation.	Breaking, Back-setting, and Summer Fallow.	Grand Total.	Tons of Hay cut.	Live Stock on Farm.														Remarks.
	Acres.	Yield.	Acres.	Yield.	Acres.	Yield.					Horses.	Oxen, I.C.B.	Oxen.	Cows, I.C.B.	Cows.	Heifers.	Steers.	Bulls.	Chickens.	Ducks.	Geese.	Turkeys.	Pigs.	Sheep.	
70 Homesteaders:																									
For 1893 - - -	2,875	33,607	559½	9,580	27	4,152	3,461½	1,011	4,472½	1,130	89	31	66	30	45	39	33	5	1,408	—	2	2	157	7	
For 1890 - - -	1,336¾	20,324	74	2,168	10	1,761	1,420¾	859	2,279¾	518	1	57	24	37	25	50	37	5	813	3	—	—	38	5	
Increase - -	1,538¼	13,283	485½	7,412	17	2,391	2,040¾	152	2,192¼	612	88	—	42	—	20	—	—	—	595	—	2	2	119	2	
Decrease - -	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	26	—	7	—	11	4	—	—	3	—	—	—	—	

APPENDIX B.

SALTCOATS CROFTERS, 1893.

Homesteaders for—	Wheat.		Oats.		Potatoes.		Total Acres under cultivation.	Breaking, Back-setting, and Summer Fallow.	Grand Total.	Tons of Hay cut.	Live Stock on Farm.														Remarks.
	Acres.	Yield.	Acres.	Yield.	Acres.	Yield.					Horses.	Oxen, I.C.B.	Oxen.	Cows, I.C.B.	Cows.	Heifers.	Steers.	Bulls.	Chickens.	Ducks.	Geese.	Turkeys.	Pigs.	Sheep.	
1893 = 23 - - -	54	728	50	794	18½	1,035	122½	174	296½	842	7	29	6	37	49	75	56	10	483	—	2	58	12	6	
1890 = 23 - - -	47½	778	73¼	1,700	8½	1,480	129	59	188	290	—	28	—	19	6	15	14	1	176	—	—	—	—	—	
Increase - - -	6¾	—	—	—	10	—	—	115	108½	552	7	1	6	18	43	60	42	9	307	—	2	58	12	6	
Decrease - - -	—	50	23¼	906	—	445	6½	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	

APPENDIX C.

April 2nd, 1894.

DEAR SIR GEORGE TREVELYAN,

As promised in August last, I have taken the opportunity of a visit to Canada on private business, to inspect the settlement of crofters at Saltcoats, for the purpose of ascertaining their present condition, and of making some inquiry into the complaints formulated in the petitions forwarded to you.

It will be within your knowledge that most of the complaints have already been investigated on several occasions, and that they relate to circumstances which occurred in 1889, connected with the conveyance of the crofters from the port of landing in Canada, to their destination, and to their settlement. The matter was fully gone into by the Colonisation Committee of the House of Commons which sat in 1889-90-91. The Secretary of the Board was examined, both before and after having visited the settlement, as well as other gentlemen who have personal knowledge of the facts and were able to speak with authority. I think I may say that the impression left on the minds of the members of the Committee was that there was little or no foundation for the complaints, and this is my own opinion as the result af my investigation.

The Saltcoats district is well adapted for mixed farming. Where the land had been properly prepared for wheat, oats, and barley, an abundant crop was harvested during the year, and I found that the surrounding farmers spoke in very favourable terms of the district and the fertility of the soil. For stock-raising it cannot be surpassed. The country is fairly well wooded, affording good shelter for the cattle, and hay of the finest quality can be obtained in great abundance at practically only the cost of labour and haulage.

The crofters at Saltcoats, partly from their own fault, and partly from an imperfect knowledge of farming, have been unfortunate in their crops in the last few years, and it is a matter for regret that they did not have much crop in 1893. They were somewhat discouraged by their want of success in previous years, and owing to the spring being rather late, did not believe a good season would follow. Consequently many of them did not sow all the grain and potatoes supplied to them for seeding purposes, but used some of it for food. The harvest turned out after all to be a fair average one, and wheat sown in the neighbourhood from the 1st to the 10th of May, averaged 20 bushels to the acre, of excellent quality. Those of the crofters who put in wheat, obtained an average return of 18 bushels to the acre, and those who did not sow any regretted it afterwards. Another reason given for little or no seed having been put in the ground in many instances, was that the oxen were very weak at seeding-time—the result of the late severe winter, and of insufficient food having been put up for them by the crofters—and were not capable of doing much work.

In their spare time the crofters have no difficulty in obtaining work. A considerable number can always obtain employment on the local railways at $1.25 a day; but they seem to prefer to work out as farm labourers, for which they often secure from $25 to $40 per month and board during harvest. The young women can readily obtain work at from $8 to $10 per month; and I was informed that several of them had made desirable marriages. It is not only in summer that work is plentiful, but in winter also it can be secured by those who look for it. Several crofters told me that they made from $20 to $60 during last winter cutting and drawing wood to Saltcoats, for which they could always obtain $3.50 (14s.) a load. There is always good local demand for butter, poultry, and eggs, and for roots and vegetables.

Apart, therefore, from the proceeds of their farms, the crofters have had many other opportunities of earning money, not only to help them in supplying food for their families, but in adding to their stock, if they wished to do so.

There is an abundance of game in the neighbourhood, particularly of prairie chickens, a variety of grouse. They can be killed from the 1st September to the 1st February, but even during the close season settlers are permitted to kill if necessary for food. Rabbits are plentiful, and the same remark applies to ducks and geese. Deer are also occasionally seen in the Colony, and five were killed in one day during last season.

In my inspection of the Colony, I went into the houses of the crofters, which, with scarcely an exception, presented a warm and comfortable appearance, nearly all of them having been greatly improved since they were built. I was informed by the wives and daughters of the crofters that they had no difficulty in keeping the houses warm. The vigorous appearance of the children I saw there much impressed me, and their condition is evidence not only of the healthiness of the climate, but of their not having suffered hardships or privations.

There are two school districts in Saltcoats, in one of which the teacher is Mr. Angus McLeod, of whom I can speak in the highest terms. His salary has been about $400 a year, two-thirds of which was paid by the North-west Territories and one-third by the Manitoba Presbytery, but recently the latter part of his remuneration has been withdrawn. In the other district Mr. Colin McLeay is the teacher. His salary was $700 a year, paid in the same proportions by the North-west Territories and Manitoba Presbytery, although the latter grant has also recently been discontinued.

I was sorry to find that so many crofters have abandoned their homesteads. It will be remembered that 49 families were assisted to emigrate, and that, in addition to the homesteads taken up by the heads of the families, 23 homesteads were also secured by younger members of the families, and in many cases they were assisted out of funds at the disposal of the Board. Altogether there have been five deaths in the Colony, and 55 persons have left their homesteads, making a total of 48 vacant homesteads. No satisfactory reason has been assigned to account for these people leaving their homesteads. Many of them however were fishermen, unaccustomed to farming, and evidently did not take to the work. They preferred employment as daily or weekly labourers, which enabled them to obtain their wages every few days, to working on their own farms. Not, however, that the two things were incompatible. They might have done their own ploughing and sowing, leaving their families to attend to the crops and cattle in many cases, and have procured outside work with which to supplement their incomes, and to help them to extend their own operations. Although they have given up farming, many are doing well in different parts of the country. Some are fishing on the Lakes Winnipeg, Manitoba, and Superior, while others are at work at the lumber mills in different parts of the country.

It is not believed that any considerable loss will result from the abandonments that have taken place. The abandoned land will be patented to the Board, and the cattle and chattels which were left have been sold, and the proceeds credited to the accounts of the crofters. It may be a little time before the homesteads can be disposed of, but it is believed that they will eventually realise nearly, if not quite, the amount of debt which on an average they represent.

While it is a matter for regret that many of the crofters have left their homesteads, I do not think that the scheme can in any way be described as a failure. Although the people have gone away, they are still doing well in various places, and in only two or three individual cases have they returned to Scotland. The fact that they have been able to get away at all, whether to other parts of Canada or across the Atlantic, is in itself an argument in favour of the measure of success they achieved, because the expense of moving a family even a few hundred miles is not inconsiderable to men in their position, and they must have been making money as the result of their labour, either at Saltcoats or elsewhere. Then again, if they are doing well anywhere in Canada, they cannot be described as failures, excepting so far as they have not remained upon the land; and in any case their preliminary

experience at Saltcoats was exceptionally valuable to them, as without it they could not have so readily assimilated themselves to the ways of the country.

In view of the circumstances I have mentioned, and of the losses experienced by the crofters in their stock in the winter of 1892-93, arising chiefly, as already stated, from insufficient fodder having been put up for their sustenance, I recommend that the Saltcoats crofters should not be pressed to meet the instalments of the loans advanced to them for a year or two. Even were they in a position to pay, I am strongly of the opinion that it would be to their interest to spend any available funds they might have in improving their farms, and in adding to their stock. They would then be in a much better position a year or two hence to liquidate their obligations, and it would distinctly encourage them to persevere.

I was not able, during my visit to Manitoba, to visit the Killarney settlement, but Professor Wallace, who went there and examined the settlement, states that he witnessed the greatest prosperity throughout the district. The amount of land under cultivation is large, the crops fairly satisfactory, and everything indicates a thriving and prosperous condition of the people.

The settlers in that district have allowed themselves to get behind with their municipal taxes, and have incurred considerable debts with implement makers and provision merchants.

In consequence of the nonpayment of their municipal taxes, the holdings of a number of the Killarney crofters have been nominally sold by the municipalities. They can, however, be redeemed within one year, which expires in May next, at a premium of 10 per cent., or within two years at a payment of 20 per cent. I trust that the crofters will pay their taxes, and in that case the security of the Board will not be invalidated. In the event, however, of any of the crofters not paying their taxes, the Board will have to consider what action should then be taken. Two courses will be open, should the Board decide to meet the liability to preserve their security (1) to add the amount to the debt against the homesteads, and get payment as soon as possible, or (2) to foreclose and dispossess the crofters of their holdings.

A satisfactory explanation has been afforded as to why the crofters allowed the proceedings to be taken against them. As a matter of fact, money can only be borrowed locally at a high rate of interest, and it is, therefore, cheaper for the settlers to allow their homesteads to be nominally sold than to borrow money for the payment of taxes in times of pressure, especially as any sale can be redeemed within one year at a premium of 10 per cent. and in two years at 20 per cent. I am told that this course is adopted when the necessity arises by other settlers as well as crofters.

For the reasons I advanced in the case of Saltcoats settlers, I recommend that those at Killarney should not be pressed to meet the instalments of the loans advanced to them for a year or two. Statements recently received from the agent of the Board show that the total debts of the settlement amount to about $48,839, of which about $23,900 represent obligations to the Board. The income of the settlement in 1893, calculated on a low basis of value, from the crops of wheat, oats and potatoes alone was however nearly $15,000. This is a very satisfactory showing, as it does not include the increase in the stock, the wages the crofters may have earned, or any other sources of income.

Mr. Borradaile, in writing at the end of November last, after a visit he had paid to the Colony, stated "the only complaint to me by the crofters was that "the low prices offered for their grain would not permit "them to meet their obligations to the Board. All "the crofters assured me they would pay their muni-"cipal indebtedness out of the proceeds of this year's "crop." They certainly ought to have no difficulty in doing what they promised, and also in paying a portion of their other debts; and to permit of this being done I recommend that the repayment of the instalments to the Board should be deferred for a year or two. Besides, as in the case of the Saltcoats settlers, I am of the opinion that they could with advantage spend any spare funds in improving their farms and in adding to their stock.

It must be remembered in considering the position of both the Killarney and Saltcoats settlements, that the prices of grain of all kinds and of other farm produce have in the last two years much depreciated—in the case of grain to the extent of nearly one-half. Had prices been maintained, the condition of the crofters to-day would have been very much better.

After fully considering the matter from every point of view, I have come to the conclusion, as already mentioned, that the colonisation scheme can in no sense be described as a failure. The families remaining at Saltcoats, notwithstanding the difficulties they have encountered, partly arising from their inexperience and previous training, and partly from one or two exceptional seasons, are in a fairly comfortable position. They all have a fair amount of stock (and would have had a much larger number had they put up enough hay in 1892) which is sure to rapidly increase if proper care is taken, and they have been very nearly self-supporting during the four years or more they have been in Canada.

Although a large number of families have left the settlement, no satisfactory explanation of their action can be given. There is no reason why they should not have succeeded as well as those remaining in the settlement or even as well as those at Killarney, if they had shown perseverance, energy, and a capacity for hard work - the elements necessary to success anywhere. But even these people cannot be described as failures. They must have earned considerable money, as previously stated, to have enabled them to take their families away from Saltcoats and settle elsewhere. This in itself is the strongest evidence that can be given in favour of the country generally, and of the district in which they were settled. It also serves to show what they might have done had they remained at Saltcoats, and devoted their attention to carrying out the agreements into which they entered, and upon the faith of which they were assisted to emigrate. As already explained, the land abandoned by them will be transferred to the Board, and when sold will nearly, if not quite, represent the money expended upon the crofters in question.

As regards Killarney, that part of the experiment, especially from the crofters' point of view, must be regarded as successful. All the families are doing well. They have a large area of land under crop, and are likely to become independent and successful farmers at no distant day. Like agriculturists everywhere they have suffered from the low prices during the last few years, both for stock and grain, circumstances which could not be foreseen when they first went out. One of the young men has already repaid the amount advanced to him, and I am looking forward to the other families commencing their repayments, and rapidly disposing of their indebtedness to the Board in the near future.

There is no doubt whatever that the condition of the crofters in Canada compares favourably with their position in the Hebrides. I believe that the money advanced to them by the Board will result in prosperity to themselves and to their families, and I am sanguine that it will be repaid.

I remain,

Yours faithfully,

(Signed) CHARLES TUPPER.

The Right Hon. Sir George O. Trevelyan, Bart.
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